

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections in the January 12, 2005 Office Action based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Pending Claims

Claims 1-18 are pending in the application. Of these Claims 1, 10, and 15 are independent claims and the remaining claims are dependent claims.

Summary of Amendments

Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 17 were amended
Claims 19-33 were added
Claim 7 was cancelled

Summary of Claim Rejections Based on Cited References

Claims 1-4, 6-7, and 9-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Uchida et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,640,253), while claims 5, 8, 14, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Uchida et al. in view of Matsunoshita et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,512,915).

Turning to the specific claim language, amended independent Claim 1 is directed to an image processing apparatus: a generating unit for generating output limitation information corresponding to the image information input by said input unit; a storing unit for storing the image information input by said input unit and the output limitation information generated by said generating unit; a reading unit for reading a document, wherein the document contains specifying information for specifying the image information stored by said storing unit; an output unit for outputting the specified image information stored by said storing unit in accordance with reading of the specifying information by said reading unit, and an output control unit for determining whether the image information specified by reading the specifying information is to be output by said

output unit based on the output limitation information corresponding to the image information, for controlling the outputting of the image information by said output unit in accordance with said determination, and for varying the output limitation information, stored by said storing unit, corresponding to the image information in accordance with outputting of the image information by said output unit.

The present invention of amended independent Claim 1 describes an image processing apparatus for copying an original document while maintaining the security of the document. According to the present invention, the output limitation information is varied in accordance with the outputting of the image information. A determination is made, based on the output limitation information corresponding to the image information, whether the image information should be outputted, where outputting the image information is controlled in accordance with the determination that is made. For example, if one aspect of the output limitation information indicates that only 10 copies of an original document can be made, then every time a copy is made, that value is decremented. Once the value reaches zero, no additional copies will be allowed since.

The present invention, as amended, also describes that the document to be read contains specifying information for specifying the stored image information, while the output limitation information is generated

Uchida et al. discloses an image processing apparatus comprising a means for inputting predetermined identification information, means for inputting attribute information for limiting outputting of image data, storage means for storing input image data, the identification information, and the attribute information in correspondence with each other, means for comparing newly input identification information with the identification information stored in the storage means, and data output means for controlling the outputting of the image data according to a comparison result and the attribute information. More specifically, Uchida et al. discloses whether to completely prohibit a copying function, prohibit color output, or to control whether to output a color image after converting it to monochrome image.

However, Uchida et al. does not disclose the present invention's feature of varying the output limitation information in accordance with the outputting of the image information. Nowhere does Uchida et al. describe that the prohibition for outputting an

image is varied based on the image information. In addition, Uchida et al. is not seen to disclose or describe the present invention's feature that the document to be read contains the information specifying the stored document. Matsunoshita et al. is not seen to remedy the deficiencies of Uchida et al. Thus, neither Uchida et al. nor Matsunoshita et al., taken either alone or in combination, are seen to anticipate the features of amended Independent Claim 1 of the present invention. Accordingly, amended Independent Claims 1 is believed allowable.

Amended Independent Claims 10 and 15 are the method and computer executable program equivalents of amended Independent Claim 1. Thus amended Independent Claims 10 and 15 are believed allowable for the same reasons set forth in the discussion above. Dependent Claims 2-6, 8-9, 11-14, and 16-18 depend from one of amended Independent Claims 1, 10, or 15. And as such, they are also believed patentable for the same reasons as discussed above. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, individual consideration of each dependent claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Newly added Independent Claim 19 is directed to an input unit for inputting image information; a generating unit for generating output limitation information, regarding to an output allowance term of the image information, corresponding to the image information input by said input unit; a storing unit for storing the image information input by said input unit and the output limitation information generated by said generating unit; a reading unit for reading a document, wherein the document contains specifying information for specifying the image information stored by said storing unit; an output unit for outputting the specified image information stored by said storing unit in accordance with reading of the specifying information by said reading unit; and an output control unit for determining whether the time when the image information is to be output by said output unit is within the output allowance term based on the output limitation information corresponding to the image information, and for controlling the outputting of the image information by said output unit in accordance said determination. More specifically, Independent Claim 19 describes an image processing apparatus that prohibits outputting of image information during a specified time or during a time other than a specified time.

Uchida et al. is not seen to disclose or describe the present invention's feature of prohibiting outputting image information based on an output allowance term. In addition, Uchida et al. is also not seen to disclose or describe the present invention's feature that the document to be read contains the information specifying the stored document.

Matsunoshita et al. discloses a recording medium outputting method and apparatus that receives time/day/month/year information with respect to when to output data stored in a database. In addition, Matsunoshita et al. also discloses differentiating color of the background image and mask image in accordance with the received time/day/month/year information (Fig. 13).

However, Matsunoshita et al. is not seen to disclose or describe the present invention's feature of prohibiting outputting image information based on an output allowance term. Furthermore, Matsunoshita et al. is not seen to teach that the stored image information is specified by reading the document containing the specifying information and the specified image information is outputted.

Thus, neither Uchida et al. nor Matsunoshita et al. taken alone or in combination are seen to anticipate the features of Independent Claim 19. Newly added Independent Claims 26 and 30 are the method and computer executable program equivalents of Independent Claim 19. Thus Independent Claims 26 and 30 are believed allowable for the same reasons set forth in the discussion above. Newly added Dependent Claims 20-25, 27-29, and 31-33 depend from one of Independent Claims 19, 26, or 30. As such, they are also believed patentable for the same reasons discussed above. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, individual consideration of each dependent claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached at (949) 932-3329. All correspondences should be directed to the below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



Attorney for Applicants

Sivon Kalminov

Registration No. 40, 042

CANON U.S.A., Intellectual Property Division
15975 Alton Parkway
Irvine, CA. 02618
Facsimile: (949) 932-3560